



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

### *Cowboy Songs and Ballads*

to have their songs transcribed and translated, as another contribution to the national fund of folk-poetry.

We are fortunate this month, through the courtesy of Mr. H. H. Knibbs, in being able to present a cowboy song, *High Chin Bob*, which is not included in Mr. Lomax's book, and which has never been published so far as we know. Mr. Knibbs found the song in southern Arizona, the "Mokiones" being a corruption of the Mogollons, the mountains in the southern part of New Mexico and Arizona. This song of the cowboy who "belly-roped" a lion, and who never left the "glory trail" although he found it rough, is certainly a classic of the southwest. It has a swing, and a precision of phrasing rare enough in any poetry. Whoever the unknown author may be, on whichever side of the Great Divide, he is to be congratulated.

A. C. H.

### TO THE WILDERNESS

In the *Yale Review* for July Mr. Henry Seidel Canby discusses "the American impulse to take to the woods," an impulse reflected by American writers. He thinks that this "survival of the pioneering instinct" springs from a deep subconsciousness in the heart of the people. He says:

Since our writing ceased being colonial English and began to reflect a race in the making, the note of woods-longing has been so insistent that one wonders whether here is not to be found at last the characteristic "trait" that we have all been patriotically seeking. . . . It represents a search for a tradition, and its capture.

We all remember the first Thanksgiving day of the pilgrim fathers—they decreed a feast because they had so nearly

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

starved before the gathering of their first harvest. I had always read the story with solemn sympathy for the pilgrims until that hardy woodsman, Hamlin Garland, pointed out how absurd it was to starve in those forests filled with game. "The fools," he said, "they hadn't sense enough to learn of the Indians—they couldn't eat until they had cleared some land and grown grain! But their sons learned," he added reflectively.

And their sons have been learning ever since. The early settlers, who hadn't much art, had to go to nature for beauty; and their children, whose art is largely derived—not a spontaneous self-expression but an inheritance or the imitation of an inheritance—their children still go back to nature for the most simple and direct communion with beauty. Confused and wearied by bad art—for poor design in architecture, poor color and form in house interiors, furnishings, dress, etc., poor literature in current books and prints, poor music in clattering rhythms of vicious noise, are all bad art, and therefore infinitely confusing and wearying—their children throw on civilization the blame for ugliness, and go to the wilds to satisfy their unconquerable need of beauty. And out of this refreshment, this re-creation in nature, may indeed spring, as Mr. Canby suggests, an art more indigenous and original, more truly our own, than all the feudal operas we sing or the Doric-temple railway stations we build.

I sometimes think that the race will be saved through love of nature, saved at last from the collective rapacity of greed and the collective violence of war. Such anachronisms can

*To the Wilderness*

not long survive among people who continually test their living and thinking by immediate contacts with wild beauty and primitive simplicity. Our own inheritance of vast areas of mountain and desert, forest, lake and sea-coast—areas which can never be civilized, and which, in some cases, the government is preserving as national parks—may be regarded as our most precious possession, an ever-flowing fountain of youth for the nation.

And what will our poets do with this inheritance? At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after two hundred years of pioneering, they had learned less from the Indian than those early Mayflower pilgrims, and so strong was the colonial instinct that it took another half-century to “get the lark out of American song.” Even when the poets began to be aware of the out-of-doors, it was rural nature, not the wilderness, which appealed to them, as in these home-bound lines from the hymn which we all sing to a foreign air:

I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills.

Here the poet's vision was limited by a gentle village slope with granite out-cropping by the stream and a church half hidden among the trees. Emerson went further, but even his woodland poems are rural, not wild. Whittier had one or two instants of a keener thrill, also Bryant in his youth; but none of that sheltered group journeyed far from his cottage, or ever felt the keen agonies and glories of nature in her own domain.

Thoreau and Whitman were the first to shake off the dust of civilization—with them the new era begins; but Thoreau

POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

never went west of Walden (how he would have grown in Arizona!), and Whitman, deep lover that he was of sea and sky and the plains, yet always peopled his great spaces, be it with no more than a bird calling its mate.

The Anglo-Saxon voyagers of six to eight centuries ago knew and loved and hated the sea, and in their sea songs is the power and grandeur of the wilderness beyond anything since attained in English poetry. Who that has read Mr. Pound's marvelous translation of *The Sea-farer* has not felt in it a deep and bitter sense of nature missed by even the masters of English song? Shakespeare has some wonderful lines about the sea; he felt it as England's protector and possession. Byron hurled some magnificent rhetoric at not only the sea but the mountains—the first English poet to be intimately moved by mountains, which is not strange since there are no mountains in England. And Swinburne loved the sea as well as a landsman can, gave it long odes of rhythmic praise. But the unknown author of *The Sea-farer* knew and sang the sea as his lover and enemy, slave and master, as the vastness immeasurable out of which he was born and into which at last he would sink like a spent sea-gull in a storm.

From the formation of the English language this note of wildness is rarely heard. A few of the old ballads have it, but rarely the great English masters. We get the tang of it from Ireland—from Synge especially, from Yeats and Colum—with a special Celtic flavor, but coming as it were from dells and clearings, not from great spaces.

### *To the Wilderness*

Perhaps it remains for our poets to feel wild immensities on land as the old Anglo-Saxon poet felt them at sea. They made a good beginning with Whitman, and we feel the authentic note in scattered songs from a few of the later nineteenth-century poets, less often from Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller, "the poet of the Sierras," than from Hamlin Garland and poets more obscure. And we feel it today in many varying voices: in the poems from Indian motives of Dr. Gordon, Miss Skinner, Mrs. Austin, Alice Corbin and others, as well as in direct translations by Natalie Curtis and other students; in John Gould Fletcher's poems of Arizona and other wild places; in C. E. S. Wood's *Poet in the Desert*; in Edith Wyatt's spacious poems of the Great Lakes and the western heights; in Vachel Lindsay's poems of Kansas and the plains. And the spirit of it, though not precisely the locale, one finds in such a poem as Mr. Frost's *Snow*; in certain things by Mr. Masters, Mr. Sandburg, Mr. Johns; and in H. D., who, however preoccupied with Greek symbols, is essentially a poet of wild nature, a daughter of the pioneers and more closely related to them in feeling than many whose locale is more obviously theirs.

American poets may bear great gifts to the mother tongue and those who speak it—perhaps before this century is over. If they can bring the art "back to nature" they will achieve a real refreshment, perhaps a re-creation, of the race.

*H. M.*